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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 010584

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TAGS: PTER PREL PGOV CO

SUBJ: FARC RESISTS RE-STARTING TALKS/SLAMS U.N.

¶1. CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR ANNE W. PATTERSON; REASONS
1.5 B,D.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY: DESPITE A SERIES OF ATTEMPTS SINCE MID-NOVEMBER BY UNSYG OUTGOING REPRESENTATIVE JAN EGELAND, GOC PEACE COMMISSIONER CAMILO GOMEZ, AND AMBASSADORS FROM THE "GROUP OF FACILITATORS" COUNTRIES TO RE-START PEACE TALKS WITH THE FARC, THE LATTER REMAIN INTRANSIGENT IN THEIR DEMANDS. THE FARC LEADERSHIP HAS STATED REPEATEDLY THAT THEY WILL NOT NEGOTIATE UNTIL THE GOC RELAXES ITS CONTROLS OVER THE "DESPEJE," ESPECIALLY THE ENTRY OF THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS SYMPATHETIC TO THE FARC AND COLOMBIAN MILITARY OVERFLIGHTS. FARC SUPREME COMMANDER MARULANDA HAS INVITED COLOMBIAN POLITICAL, JUDICIAL AND BUSINESS LEADERS TO A JANUARY 15, 2001 MEETING IN THE "DESPEJE" TO CLARIFY WHAT THE COLOMBIAN ESTABLISHMENT IS WILLING TO NEGOTIATE. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (U) ON NOVEMBER 26, FARC SUPREME COMMANDER MANUEL MARULANDA SENT A LETTER THROUGH GOC PEACE COMMISSIONER CAMILO GOMEZ TO PRESIDENT PASTRANA, IN WHICH HE ARGUES THAT THE GOC HAS TAKEN ALL CONCRETE "NEGOTIABLES" OFF THE TABLE, INCLUDING PLAN COLOMBIA, AERIAL ERADICATION OF ILLICIT CROPS, THE ELECTORAL CALENDAR, PRISONER EXCHANGES, AND INTERNATIONAL TREATIES SUBSCRIBED BY COLOMBIA ON ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, JUDICIAL ISSUES, AND EXTRADITION.

¶4. (U) MARULANDA CONCLUDES THAT THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE GOC, AND CALLS FOR A MEETING ON JANUARY 15, 2002 IN THE FARC "DEMILITARIZED ZONE" ("DESPEJE") WITH THE SENATE AND HOUSE SPEAKERS, THE SUPREME AND CONSTITUTIONAL COURT PRESIDENTS, THE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY PRESIDENTS, AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HIERARCHY. HE STATED HE EXPECTS THIS GROUP TO EXPLAIN TO HIM "EXACTLY WHAT IS NEGOTIABLE."

¶5. (U) MARULANDA'S LETTER FOLLOWS A SERIES OF LARGELY UNSUCCESSFUL MEETINGS IN THE "DESPEJE" WITH UNSYG COLOMBIA REPRESENTATIVE JAN EGELAND, GOC PEACE COMMISSIONER CAMILO GOMEZ, AND EU AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS, RESPECTIVELY. ON NOVEMBER 16, THE FARC REFUSED JAN EGELAND'S REQUEST TO MEET IN THE DESPEJE. INSTEAD, FARC SPOKESMAN RAUL REYES SENT EGELAND A LETTER STATING THAT EGELAND WOULD NOT BE GIVEN AN AUDIENCE UNTIL THE GOC LIFTED AN ORDER PROHIBITING FREE ENTRY OF THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS INTO THE DESPEJE AS WELL AS OTHER RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF THE ZONE.

¶6. (C) SEVERAL DAYS LATER, THE FARC CHANGED ITS MIND AND MET ON NOVEMBER 22 WITH EGELAND AND NEWLY-DESIGNATED

UNSYG COLOMBIA REPRESENTATIVE JAMES LEMOYNE IN THE "DESPEJE." ALTHOUGH EGELAND TOLD LOCAL PRESS THAT BOTH SIDES STILL HAVE THE WILL TO MOVE THE PROCESS FORWARD, EMBASSY CONTACTS SAID THAT THE MEETING WAS DIFFICULT AT BEST, AND THAT FARC INTERLOCUTORS RAUL REYES AND JOAQUIN GOMEZ TOLD EGELAND AND LEMOYNE IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS THAT TALKS COULD NOT PROCEED SO LONG AS THE GOC MAINTAINS ITS NEW, TIGHTER CONTROLS OVER THE "DESPEJE." ON NOVEMBER 23, CAMILO GOMEZ MET WITH REYES AND GOMEZ, AND WAS REPORTEDLY GIVEN ESSENTIALLY THE SAME MESSAGE -- RELAX CONTROL OVER THE ZONE AND THEN WE'LL SEE.

¶ 17. (C) ON NOVEMBER 25, A DELEGATION OF "GROUP OF FACILITATORS" AMBASSADORS MET WITH REYES AND GOMEZ IN THE "DESPEJE." ON NOVEMBER 26, A FOREIGN DIPLOMAT WHO WAS PRESENT AT THE MEETING TOLD POL/ECONCOUNS THAT THE ATMOSPHERICS WERE "VERY FORMAL," THAT REYES AND GOMEZ HAMMERED AT THE GOC SECURITY CONTROLS OVER THE DESPEJE, ESPECIALLY THE OVERFLIGHTS, AND THAT THEY WERE FIRM ON THEIR POSITION THAT CONTROLS HAVE TO BE RELAXED.

¶ 18. (C) THE DIPLOMAT SAID THE AMBASSADORS, LED BY FRENCH AMBASSADOR PARFAIT (FRANCE IS NOW CHAIR OF THE "GROUP OF FACILITATORS," UNDER A ROTATING CHAIR SYSTEM), TOLD THE FARC THAT THE EU WILL MEET IN DECEMBER TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE OF FARC VISAS AND EXPLAINED THAT SOME MEMBERS WERE ADVOCATING A HARD LINE BASED ON THE FARC KIDNAPPINGS OF FOREIGNERS. ASKED WHETHER THE GROUP HAD GIVEN THE FARC AN "ULTIMATUM" CALLING FOR THE FARC TO CHANGE ITS TACTICS OR LOSE THE VISAS, THE DIPLOMATS ANSWERED THAT NEITHER AN "ULTIMATUM," NOR A HARD MESSAGE HAD BEEN DELIVERED BY THE EU.

¶ 19. (C) THE DIPLOMAT SAID THAT THE GROUP ASKED THE FARC TO MAKE SOME TYPE OF "GESTURE" THAT WOULD HELP ADVANCE THE PEACE PROCESS. IN THE END, THE FARC MADE NO PROMISES TO EITHER MAKE A "GESTURE" OR TO AGREE TO A BROADER MEETING WITH THE GOC NEGOTIATING TEAM AND FACILITATORS. INSTEAD, THE FARC COMPLAINED THAT SUCH A MEETING WAS UNLIKELY UNTIL/UNLESS THE GOC LIFTS SOME OF ITS SECURITY CONTROLS. THE DIPLOMAT SAID THAT, INSTEAD, REYES AND GOMEZ USED THE OPPORTUNITY TO RAIL AGAINST THE UNITED NATIONS, WHICH THEY CHARACTERIZED AS AN UNREPRESENTATIVE BODY BECAUSE "SOCIALIST COUNTRIES ARE NOT FAIRLY REPRESENTED IN IT."

¶ 110. (C) COMMENT: THE FARC LEADERSHIP CONTINUES TO PLAY BRINKMANSHIP WITH THE PEACE PROCESS. THEY HAVE NOT BUDGED AT ALL IN THEIR DEMAND THAT THE GOC RELAX ITS CONTROLS OVER THE "DESPEJE," BEFORE TALKS CAN RESUME. THE FARC LIKELY FEELS VULNERABLE TO THE COLOMBIAN SECURITY FORCES' ADDED SURVEILLANCE OF THE ZONE, WHICH THEY BELIEVE ADVERSELY IMPACTS THEIR ABILITY TO USE THE ZONE AS A REPOSITORY FOR KIDNAP VICTIMS AND STOLEN CATTLE AND VEHICLES; A REST AND RECUPERATION AND TRAINING AREA FOR COMBATANTS, AND A COCA GROWING ZONE. MARULANDA'S LATEST OFFER TO DELAY TALKS UNTIL NEXT JANUARY 15 IS PROBABLY INTENDED TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE GOC AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY (ESPECIALLY THE EUROPEANS) TO EASE UP ON CONTROLS OVER THE "DESPEJE" AND ON THE EU'S POSSIBLE REVOCATION OF VISAS TO LEVERAGE THE FARC.

PATTERSON

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